

BREEDING RECORDS OF SOME TANZANIAN BIRDS

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In 1984 the author submitted all his breeding records of Tanzanian birds, collected between 1930 and 1962, to Mr P.B. Taylor for inclusion in the East Africa Natural History Society Nest Record Scheme. The result has been to highlight a number of important and interesting records of birds for which there are at present no cards for East Africa, or no cards for Tanzania, or only one or two in each case. They also include the first description of the nest of Moreau's Sunbird *Nectarinia moreaui* and the first East African breeding records of the Morning Thrush *Cichladusa arquata* and Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas*.

The majority of these records have not been published before, others were published some years ago in the body of papers on other subjects, or in journals not confined to matters of ornithological interest, e.g. *Tanganyika Notes and Records*. As some of those available do not appear to have been used by Brown & Britton (1980) when compiling *The Breeding Seasons of East African Birds*, it is thought worthwhile to include them here.

Unfortunately, some of the records presented in this paper are based only on the state of gonads which, following the criteria of Brown & Britton (1980), can only be indicative of the breeding season of the species. For those species where records are sparse or non-existent, it has been considered worth including them here.

Podiceps nigricollis Black-necked Grebe

Brown & Britton (1980) list 18 records, all from Region D, covering the months May to August inclusive, suggesting a breeding season after the long rains. After the very heavy short rains of 1961, a nest with 2 eggs was found on 7 January 1962 at Eluanata Dam, Masailand, in Region D. The dam had filled completely at a season when it was normally reduced to a small area of water immediately above the dam wall. This species and the many other species of waterfowl nesting there in January 1962 demonstrate the birds' ability to take timely advantage of suitable conditions for breeding when they occur.

Oxyura maccoa Maccoa Duck

There are only six records for this species in Brown & Britton (1980) all from Region D, and scattered through the months March-October. In addition to a November record from Arusha National Park (Hazel A. Britton 1981), three nests with eggs were found at Eluanata Dam on 27 February 1962, extending the breeding season to the short rains and the dry season before the long rains.

Sarkidiornis melanotos Knob-billed Goose

As there is only one record for Region D in Brown & Britton (1980), for the month of February, it is worth noting two nests with eggs on 27 February 1962 on Eluanata Dam, and another record of a female with

egg in shell in the oviduct on 28 February 1952, from Kilingali, Kilosa.

Coturnix coturnix Quail

Records of two nests from the Ar dai Plains, northern Tanzania, on 28 June 1944 (Fuggles-Couchman & Elliott 1946) have provided data for the first cards from Tanzania in the Nest Record Scheme.

Fulica cristata Red-knobbed Coot

The numerous records available to Brown & Britton (1980) from Region D show a clear peak in May-July, with a secondary peak in September-October, with only one record for January. However, this is another species which will take advantage of suitable conditions for breeding when they occur. In January 1962 it was in full breeding activity on Eluanata Dam, northern Tanzania. Details were taken of three nests, but at least another six nests with eggs were found.

Rostratula benghalensis Painted Snipe

A nest with 4 eggs at Lake Manyara on 3 August 1959 has provided data for the first card for this species from Tanzania in the Nest Record Scheme. This nest is the same as that recorded by Thomas (1960).

Streptopelia decipiens Mourning Dove

Brown & Britton (1980) have five records for this species from Region C, all for May, in the early dry season. A nest found on 21 March 1957, SW of Dodoma in Region C, contained one almost fully fledged nestling and one addled egg, and the breeding season would have coincided with the main rains. This record provides the first card from Tanzania for this species.

Oena capensis Namaqua Dove

A nest with 2 eggs, found near Dar es Salaam on 2 July 1936, adds to the scanty records for this species in Brown & Britton (1980), and provides further evidence of a dry season breeding season.

Tauraco porphyreolophus Violet-crested Turaco

There are only two East African breeding records for this species, both from Tanzania (Taylor, pers. comm.) from near Iringa in Region C (Brown & Britton 1980). A female collected at Kidete, northern Kilosa, in Region D on 3 March 1934 contained a well-formed egg in the oviduct, and provides a first record from that Region.

Merops boehmi Boehm's Bee-eater

This species appears to have been overlooked by Brown & Britton (1980) and there is no card in the Nest Record Scheme from East Africa. A female collected on 17 September 1937 on the edge of the gallery forest at Mvuha, southern Morogoro, had a well-developed egg in the oviduct. The date of this record falls within the peak season for other *Merops* spp. in Region D, especially the Little Bee-eater *M. pusillus*.

Merops hirundineus Swallow-tailed Bee-eater

There is only one dated record in Brown & Britton (1980), which is from Region A. Although only based on the condition of the gonads, a record from Region D should be noted. A male, with enlarged gonads

was collected south of Dar es Salaam on 3 October 1935, suggesting breeding towards the end of the dry season between the long and short rains; c.f. the suggestion in Brown & Britton (1980) that egg-laying in Region A may be at the end of the dry season.

Tockus alboterminatus Crowned Hornbill

Only four records from Region D are given by Brown & Britton (1980) in February, September (2) and November, and in Regions D and E. Together the records show a definite preference for the dry season. A record from the western foothills of the Nguru Mts, of a pair feeding young at the nest on 20 July 1931, follows the same pattern, although rather earlier in the dry season.

Lybius torquatus Black-collared Barbet

Up to 1982 there were only three dated East African breeding records (Brown & Britton 1980, Taylor 1983b), one of which is from Tanzania, from Tatanda in Region C. Brown & Britton (1980) refer to breeding in Eastern Tanzania, possibly in Region D, in January. This is believed to refer to a record of a pair at a nesthole presumed to contain young, as an adult was seen to leave the nest carrying a faecal sac (Fuggles-Couchman 1939). This record was from near Dar es Salaam, Region D.

Dendropicos fuscescens Cardinal Woodpecker

A pair feeding young at the nest on 25 December 1953, at Morningside, Morogoro, and a Nest Record card from Arusha (Taylor 1983b), both in Region D, together with a card from Mpanda, Region C (Hazel A. Britton 1981), both for December, suggest that in Tanzania this species shows a great preference for the period covering the latter part of the short rains, rather than the dry season as suggested by Brown & Britton (1980).

Smithornis capensis African Broadbill

Brown & Britton (1980) have only one record from Region D, for December. Records based on the condition of gonads of three males collected (a) in Dar es Salaam district, 23 January 1936, (b) Kingolwira, Morogoro, 11 February 1938 and (c) Mbulumbulu, northern Tanzania, 18 November 1943, suggest a breeding season in Region D covering the latter part of the short rains into the dry season following them.

Parus rufiventris Rufous-bellied Tit

The only card for this species for East Africa is from Tanzania (P.B. Taylor, pers. comm.), from Arusha National Park, Region D, for April (Hazel A. Britton 1980). A male collected at Kingolwira, Morogoro on 4 August 1938 had enlarged gonads and is worth noting.

Alcippe abyssinica African Hill Babbler

There were no East African breeding records of this species up to the end of 1982 (Brown & Britton 1980, Taylor 1983a, b). Breeding has been noted at the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest, Kenya (Region D), from November to January in 1984-86, in the period between the short and long rains (P.B. Taylor, *in litt.*). An indication of the possible breeding season in Region C is provided by a male, collected in

gallery forest at 1990 m on Mt Hanang on 4 February 1946, which had much enlarged gonads and was in full song.

Andropadus importunus Zanzibar Sombre Greenbul

A nest with 2 eggs was found in coastal scrub near Dar es Salaam on 8 January 1956. Brown & Britton (1980) list only six records from Region D, and only one falling in January.

Cichladusa arquata Morning Thrush

A nest containing 2 eggs, found on 20 May 1952, is the first East African record for this species. The nest was placed on the capital of a pillar in the verandah of the Old Boma, Morogoro.

Turdus libonyanus Kurrichane Thrush

There is no record in Brown & Britton (1980) for this species from Region D. A male in full song and with much enlarged gonads was collected at Msongozi, Morogoro district, on 12 October 1937, suggesting a breeding season similar to that for this species in Region C.

Acrocephalus gracilirostris Lesser Swamp Warbler

As there are no cards in the Nest Record Scheme from Tanzania, it is worth noting several new nests in scattered patches of *Cyperus auratus* in Eluanata Dam on 7 January 1962. No eggs were found.

Apalis alticola Brown-headed Apalis

There are no records for this species in Brown & Britton (1980), nor is it included in their lists of birds falling into Categories 1 and 2. It is therefore of interest to note a male, with much enlarged gonads, collected on 4 February in gallery forest on the NE slopes of Mt Hanang, at 2100 m. Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955) give the breeding season in Central Tanzania as probably October-February.

Chloropeta similis Mountain Yellow Warbler

Brown & Britton (1980) give only three records for this species, in July, August and November, and all from Region D. A bird seen carrying nesting material at Mbulumbulu on 16 October 1943 is worth noting.

Macrosphenus kretschmeri Kretschmer's Longbill

There is only one East African record (Brown & Britton 1980) for this species, in April in Region D. It is therefore worth noting a male in full song, and with much enlarged gonads, collected in the Pugu Hills, Dar es Salaam, on 14 April 1936.

Batis mixta Forest Batis

There are only four East African breeding records (P.B. Taylor pers. comm.) and none from Tanzania, although Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955) give the recorded breeding for Tanzania as October-December. A nest found in rain forest at Bunduki, western Uluguru Mts on 23 December 1956, and containing 2 eggs, appears to be a first record for Tanzania.

Trochocercus albonotatus White-tailed Crested Flycatcher

Brown & Britton (1980) give only five records for this species in East Africa, all from Amani, Tanzania, and all in October. A record

from another Tanzanian locality, in the northern Uluguru Mts near Morogoro, can be added: a pair was watched finishing building a nest on 26 December 1953. At the Kikuyu Escarpment forest, Kenya, breeding has been noted in September-October and December-March, these months representing the pre-short rains dry period and the dry spell between short and long rains; there are no records for the wet month of November (P.B. Taylor, *in litt.*).

Trochocercus cyanomelas Crested Flycatcher

There are no East African breeding records for this species (P.B. Taylor, pers. comm.). It is therefore worth noting a male, with much enlarged gonads, collected in rain forest at Mbulumbu on 16 November 1942. The date indicates a breeding season in the short rains, c.f. Brown & Britton (1980) for *T. albonotatus* above.

Anthus lineiventris Striped Pipit

A nest and eggs found on 3 July 1958 near Bolisa, Kondoa Irangi, is of special interest, as it is only the second breeding record from East Africa, and the first record of eggs. The first published record was also from Tanzania, from the Nguru Mts, Region D, where J.S.S. Beesley recorded large young being fed in the nest in late December 1966 (P.B. Taylor, pers. comm.). There were 3 eggs, of a pale bluish-white ground colour, heavily spotted with sepia, with a distinct band near the larger end.

Tchagra minuta Marsh Tchagra

A male was seen feeding an immature female, later collected, on 9 May 1934, at Chonwe, Uvidunda Mts, southern Kilosa, at 1550 m. This is the first breeding record from Region D in East Africa. Seven records from Regions A and B in Brown & Britton (1980) indicate breeding during the rains, as was the case with the Uvidunda record.

Lanius cabanisi Long-tailed Fiscal

As there is no June record in Brown & Britton (1980) for this species in Region D it is worth recording a bird incubating on 28 June 1942 at Kileo, Pare district.

Nectarinia moreaui Moreau's Sunbird

The nest of this species appears still to be undescribed (P.B. Taylor pers. comm.). On 26 December 1952 a nest was found on the edge of rain forest at Masenge, Ukaguru Mts, Kilosa district, at 1800 m. That locality falls into Region D. The nest was a small domed purse, attached to an upright stem of a small shrub, 2 m from the ground. There was an entrance hole near the top of the nest, which was built almost entirely of dry grasses, with no embellishment. The nest contained two half-fledged nestlings.

Ploceus bicolor Dark-backed Weaver

There are only two records for this species given by Brown & Britton (1980), only one of which is from Region D, for the month of August. Records of nest building on 25 May 1939, on the edge of forest in the Nguru Mts, and a pair constantly entering and leaving a nest on the edge of the Pugu Forest, Dar es Salaam, on 12 December 1953, suggest breeding towards the end of the long and short rains.

Ploceus jacksoni Golden-backed Weaver

While the breeding season of this species in Region D is very well documented (Brown & Britton 1980), there are no records outside the long rains. It is therefore worth noting two records from the northern province, the first of a colony at Eluanata Dam on 7 January 1962 with eggs, and the second, on 20 February 1959, of an active colony which could not be closely examined, at Lake Babati, Mbulu district, which may lie in Region C.

Euplectes afer Yellow-crowned Bishop

Records in Brown & Britton (1980) from Region D suggest a breeding season mainly in the long rains May-June. Only one record is given for January and it is worth noting a nest with 2 eggs found on 1 January 1962 at Eluanata Dam, northern Tanzania.

Euplectes nigroventris Zanzibar Red Bishop

The sixteen breeding season records from Region D given by Brown & Britton (1980) show no well-defined season, although attention is drawn to the fact that the months with more than one colony are all in the rains.

The author, when investigating the breeding ecology of this species and the Black-winged Red Bishop *E. hordeaceus*, which were nesting in adjacent and intermingled territories (Fuggles-Couchman 1943), recorded 14 nests of *E. nigroventris* containing eggs in the period April-June, during the latter half of the long rains and into the early dry season. Monthly totals of new nests with eggs were: April 5; May 4; June 5. These observations were made in Morogoro. Three other colonies recorded elsewhere were found on 28 January at Kilingali, Kilosa and on 24 and 30 April, both at Msasani, Dar es Salaam.

While *E. nigroventris* will use small shrubs in which to build, as in the case of the January and February records, and is therefore not entirely dependent on the growth of tall grasses to the same extent as *E. hordeaceus*, the breeding season of the former species does appear to peak in the long rains.

Cryptospiza reichenovii Red-faced Crimson-wing

There are only two East African records for this species in Brown & Britton (1980), both from Region B and both for the month of March. A pair was watched building a nest in creepers overhanging a small pool in the Lengopiron River, on the eastern edge of the Crater Highlands in Region D, on 2 February 1945. The nest was about half-completed and the dead leaves, dry grass and leaf skeletons used in its construction gave it already the appearance of an old nest.

Linurgus olivaceus Oriole Finch

There still appears to be no breeding record of this species in East Africa, so that it may be worth drawing attention here to a male, collected on 4 July in forest on Monduli Mt at 1850 m, which had much enlarged gonads (Fuggles-Couchman & Elliott 1946).

Serinus canicollis Yellow-crowned Canary

A male with much enlarged gonads was collected on 7 February 1946 on

the NE slopes of Mt Hanang at 2100 m. Judging from the description of the area covered by Region D in Tanzania (Brown & Britton 1980), Mt Hanang almost certainly lies within Region C, and this record is the first for this species from that Region.

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